

Berwyn's new marketing campaign is full of 'character'

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Photo provided by Berwyn Development Corporation

BERWYN – Berwyn is a city rich with culture and history, and this year's "Nothing Like a Suburb" marketing campaign is highlighting some of the "characters" that make Berwyn the community it is.

This is the 11th annual summer campaign that primarily targets Chicago residents and businesses. This year's themes, "Full of Character(s)" and "Handcrafted Community," showcase community members who are putting Berwyn on the map and making it a destination location.

The campaign, which is focused on outdoor advertising like billboards or public transportation signs, highlights four Berwyn "characters."

Berwyn resident Paul Macchione is the owner of Flapjack Brewery, Berwyn's first small-batch craft brewery. Chef Oliver Valenzuela owns Oliver's Prime Cuts & Fresh Seafood, which serves American contemporary farm-to-table specialties. Berwyn resident, artist and entrepreneur Jessy Laubis owns Jessy Laubis Handmade and also organizes the Craft and Vintage Market. Actor Ilse Zacharias played the lead in the 16th Street Theater's production of "Into the Beautiful North."

Amy Crowther, director of chamber services at the Berwyn Development Corporation, said those particular people were chosen because they represent a good cross-section of what Berwyn has to offer.

"All of them are representative of how energetic our community is and who all illustrate the handcrafted community and character of Berwyn," she said. "We talk a lot about 'homegrown,' and so many things here are homegrown. People are coming together and doing great things."

Crowther said the campaign's target market is primarily first-time or "move-up" homebuyers who want the feel of a big city at a more reasonable cost of living.

"Berwyn offers the same level of cultural amenities and transportation options as Chicago, and it's more affordable,"

she said. “We have active nightlife and a lot of special events. It’s pretty incredible. There is a lot of vibrancy in terms of our business community. We also have a warm, welcoming attitude, and we are a progressive city. Berwyn has a great location, so there’s a convenience factor. We also have a great housing stock and the highest concentration of Chicago-style bungalows outside of Chicago.”

The marketing campaign began in 2007 after residents who had advertising and design backgrounds approached the city and Berwyn Development Corporation about doing something to promote Berwyn after the economic downturn.

Newly elected First Ward alderman Scott Lennon was instrumental in getting the campaign off the ground. He said he loves living in the city and wanted to market Berwyn in Chicago for “residential and business attraction.”

“We’re looking at urban, eclectic residents who want to stay close to the city and who want to live in historic homes. I’ve noticed a lot of diversity in the new residents,” he said. “The campaign has been really successful, and we’ve gotten new business. Berwyn is a city of homes, and people can get the same house in Berwyn at a better price than in Chicago with the same neighborhood feel.”

The campaign recently was featured in the Homes for a Changing Region best practices toolkit, which was created by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, Metropolitan Mayors Caucus and Metropolitan Planning Council. The online kit was put together to help other communities plan for current and future residents.

Crowther said the recognition was a “huge honor.”

“We were selected because of our success in stimulating investment and building brand awareness for Berwyn,” she said. “Our sales tax volume has grown since 2007, and residential investment has grown 71 percent. A lot of other communities have lost population, but Berwyn has been steady. We have a solid base of millennials. Our median income growth has outpaced national growth, and we overtook inflation. We’re a strong community.”